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MORE THAN \$1 MILLION LOST TO SCAMS

A large unexpected inheritance, a lottery or a new love? All are promises scammers have used to seduce unsuspecting South Australians into parting with their hard earned dollars.

The State Government is urging South Australians, particularly those who are seduced into providing their personal details to fraudsters, to be extremely wary.

The warning comes as Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine and Detective Superintendent Jim Jeffery, Commercial & Electronic Crime Branch, launch 'Fraud Fortnight' in conjunction with the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce.

Minister Rankine said "Scams are solely designed to trick you into giving away your money or personal details so they can access your bank account. Its estimated in the last financial year, people have parted with around 1 million dollars."

"The first week of this scams campaign is focusing on 'seduction' scams where people are seduced by great offers that a scammer never intends to deliver. These false offers can include a large inheritance, a new love interest or a supposed lottery win."

"Scammers contact their victims in a variety of ways - mail, email, telephone, over the internet and door-to-door. Many people contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs each year asking about scams and if they should respond. Through OCBA we keep a list of scams which have been notified or identified and the public can check these on OCBA's website www.ocba.sa.gov.au or www.scamwatch.gov.au"

Detective Superintendent Jim Jeffery said that the South Australia Police try to track down fraudsters but it can be extremely difficult when scams are distributed by technology and are from overseas.

"The development of new technology means scammers are constantly concocting new ways to contact and deceive you."

"You need to be continually mindful that just because someone is asking for your personal details it doesn't mean you should hand them over, whether it's a holiday, or a hot date; the offer might just be a scam," Mr Jeffery said.

Types of scams reported by South Australians include:

- **Dating / Friendship Scams** - Through dating sites and internet chat rooms scammers are befriending people to commit to a 'relationship'. Scammers seek money for travel, food, or medical expenses by telling stories of themselves or relatives being ill and money is needed urgently.

- **Beneficiary / Inheritance Scams** - Unsolicited emails often have the scammer stating they are a solicitor or from a government agency and they request your help to forward a substantial sum of money to a victim. The scammer states that money is trapped in banks due to civil wars or government restrictions. The email recipient is asked to pay various fees, such as antiterrorist certificates, taxes or storage expenses.
- **Overpayment / Advance Fee** - Scammers book accommodation through hotels or share accommodation advertised on the internet or they purchase goods through online companies. The scammers invent an excuse for overpayment, such as that the extra money is for shipping costs or travel expenses. The scammers then ask for the excess to be sent back to them via a money transfer, hoping that the money is refunded before it is discovered that the cheque is dishonoured or the visa details used are fake or stolen.
- **Lottery / Sweepstakes** - These are generally sent through unsolicited emails and consumers are told they have won a large prize in a sweepstake or lottery. The scammer requests that the victim sends their personal details and/or money so that he winnings can be released.

Detective Superintendent Jim Jeffery said that of all scams registered with the Commercial and Electronic Crime Branch, 31% relate to dating and friendship scams.

Tips to prevent being seduced by scams:

- **Don't respond to unsolicited emails** - Opening spam messages may also lead to a computer virus being secretly installed on your computer. Be suspicious of emails from an unknown origin, especially ones that promise money, good health or a solution to all your problems. Be sceptical of offers that are too good to be true—they usually are!
- **Don't disclose personal information** - Never respond to requests for confidential banking details such as your PIN or internet banking password.
- **If in doubt, delete or destroy** - If you receive an email that looks dubious - for example the subject line looks suspicious or you don't recognise the sender - it is safest to delete it without opening it.

“The message is simple, if in doubt, don't give your details out,” Ms Rankine said.

Fraud Fortnight runs from 24 February to 8 March 2008 and aims to increase awareness about deceptive and seductive scams.

To report a suspected scam contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on 8204 9777 or country callers 131 882. Information on scams is available at www.ocba.sa.gov.au or www.scamwatch.gov.au.